

Submitter: Amelia Kercher
On Behalf Of: Support for CSL for Children's Advocacy Centers
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Hello My name is Amelia Kercher and I am the Executive Director for the Amani Center, we are the Child Advocacy Center for Columbia County providing child forensic medical assessment and support services to child victims and their caregivers/families. We have also recently started providing support to Clatsop County through a linkage agreement with The Lighthouse for Kids, Clatsop County's Child Advocacy Center.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

I would like to encourage you to support the Capital Request that my colleague Kimberly Dutton outlined, requesting \$800,000 to assist in building a permanent home for the Amani Center. This critical funding will allow us to continue to serve child victims and their families/caregivers.

I am here however to speak to you in support of critical funding found House Bill 3196 and Policy Option Package 327 that impacts the work we do.

Currently, Oregon is facing a 42% reduction in Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. The Amani Center receives VOCA funds to help provide services and these cuts will affect us, but we are very concerned about the impact to the partners that we work with some of whom rely solely on these funds for operations including District Attorney's Office Victim Advocate Programs, Domestic and Sexual Violence response programs, CAC's and other victims services organizations state-wide. We encourage you to support the \$18.5million in funding contained in HB 3196 that will offset these federal cuts and sustain critical services.

In addition, we want to encourage you to support POP #327. In the last 2 biennia, funding has been passed with the intention of creating permanent ongoing sustaining funding for the CAC's who are providing statutorily mandated services like child abuse medical exams and forensic interviews. In fact, the 2024 Legislature indicated their support of this continued funding by passing Rep. Kropf's HB 4140, which stated that these funds should be considered Current Service Level.

If these funds are not allocated, it will drastically diminish the capacity of CACs to provide essential support leaving many child abuse victims without access to trauma-informed care and advocacy. Our services are integral to the effectiveness of police, prosecution and child welfare agencies and the loss of funding will reduce the ability for our system to protect our most vulnerable.